



Board Meeting Procedure

based on
Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order exists to facilitate the decision-making process of groups. Based upon Parliamentary Procedure, Robert's Rules ensure that the discussion is focused and efficient and that the rights of both the majority and the minority are protected. Below are some of the basic procedural elements within Robert's Rules that help a meeting run more smoothly and keep discussion on track.

It is important to note that you don't need a *motion* and a *second* to turn off the lights on your way out. Most discussion will develop and proceed naturally and some decisions can be made by consensus. But when there are important decisions to be made, especially when they are emotionally charged, Robert's Rules and Parliamentary Procedure have a wonderful way of keeping the discussion focused, the commentary productive, and the decision making objective and fair.

Legacy provides the following guidelines for your convenience.

T*his procedure will feel awkward at first, and for this reason it is important that the **Chairperson** is very familiar with the procedures and comfortable in the role. Discipline and patience will be required of the entire group and will be greatly rewarded in productivity and by a general satisfaction of the members.*

Chairperson

Each meeting is facilitated or guided by a Speaker or Chairperson. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the meeting runs smoothly and fairly. The Chairperson remains impartial during the debate and must have the deference and respect of all those in the room. The Chairperson is not a judge or final arbitrator, but it is up to him or her to make sure that procedure is followed at those times when the group agrees to follow Robert's Rules.

T*he basis of most discussions at meetings is the need for the group to make a decision together. In Robert's Rules, the discussion begins with a formal **motion** and is confirmed by a **second**. This is followed by an orderly **discussion**, during which, the original motion may be **amended**.*

Main Motion

The motion is simply the moment when a member of the committee articulates a solution or conclusion to the issue at hand, e.g., *“I move that we fund this grant proposal.”* A motion can only be put forward by a voting member of the assembly. Each motion must have a “mover” and a “seconded” to show that it has at least a minimum of support from the delegates, e.g., *“I second the motion.”* Once a motion has been moved and seconded, it is officially ‘on the floor’ for discussion. At this point, debate must focus on the substance of the motion. All other discussion is out of order and not allowed. A main motion may not be introduced if there is any other motion on the floor. If necessary, motions can be written on a blackboard, easel, or overhead so that everyone is clear on what is being discussed.

Discussion

Once a motion is introduced, the chairperson will facilitate an orderly discussion. The “mover” is welcomed to speak first and the “seconded” of the motion is given the right to speak next. To ensure that all members of the assembly have an equal opportunity to speak, the chairperson will welcome the comments of those who have not yet spoken before those who already have spoken.

Amendments

At any time, a person who has the floor can introduce an amendment to the main motion being debated. An amendment is a motion that alters, adds to, subtracts from, or completely changes the main motion. e.g., *“I move that we fund this grant proposal with a grant agreement that specifies how the money is to be spent.”* Like a main motion, an amendment must be moved and seconded. Once that has happened, debate must center on the amendment. Once an amended motion has either been passed, defeated, or withdrawn, discussion may revert back to the main motion, if necessary.

Point of Order

If a member feels that the rules of order are being broken, he or she can immediately raise a ‘point of order’ and state what rule has been broken or not enforced by the chair. A point of order can interrupt a speaker, but it can only be used to ask the chair to enforce the rules. The chair decides if the point is valid or not, and proceeds accordingly.

A discussion may have one of several possible outcomes. Once everyone has had a chance to speak, and it is clear that nothing new is being brought to the discussion, the chairperson or another voting member should **call the question**, i.e., bring it to a vote. Sometimes an issue may not reach this stage if members choose to **table** the decision for a later date or **refer** the decision to a committee.

Calling the Question

When it is clear that there is agreement in the room, a member may call the question. Then a vote is taken by the Chair who asks, *“All in favor? Opposed?”* Those who do not vote are noted by the secretary to have abstained. The result of the vote is stated by the Chair, i.e., *“Motion carried”* if those in favor are a majority, *“Motion is defeated”* if the opposed are a majority.

A discussion may easily become a debate, which is more difficult to manage for the chair. A productive debate only lasts about ten minutes; beyond this there is usually little progress made. Any voting member may call the question when it appears that the debate is no longer productive. If there is objection to the call, then the meeting must vote on whether to end debate. This vote requires a two-thirds (2/3) majority to pass, and is non-debatable. If the 'call' passes, a vote on the main motion is immediately taken, without any further debate.

Table

If a decision on a motion needs to be postponed for some reason, any voting member can move to 'table' the motion. A member may not move to table a motion at the end of a speech, only at the time they are recognized by the chair. A specified time may be put on the tabling or the motion may be left indefinite. The only debate allowed is as to the length of tabling, or the time-line involved. A motion to table requires only a simple majority.

Refer

This motion is generally used to send a pending question to a committee so that the questions may be carefully investigated. This motion must be seconded and is debatable, but the debate can only extend to the desirability of referring the main motion, not the substance of the main motion itself.

Reconsider

A motion to reconsider is applicable to a motion that was passed at the same meeting. Such a motion must be moved by someone who voted with the prevailing majority on the previous vote. It requires a two-thirds (2/3) majority to pass.

E*ach motion that is discussed by the board should appear in the minutes with the outcome clearly stated.*

Minutes

The numbering of motions always is by date, and then by when the motion arose in the meeting (YEAR/MONTH/DAY: NUMBER IN ORDER). So the fourth motion during the June 23, 1999 meeting would be numbered like this: 99/06/23:4.

The secretary should state if the motion was TABLED or REFERRED, or if the motion came to a vote. Three numbers appear after the number of every motion that was 'CARRIED', 'DEFEATED' or 'TIED,' and are arranged in a specific order. The first number indicates the number voting in favor; the second is the number voting against; the third is the number abstaining. Thus, a decision which saw seven members in favor, four against, and two abstaining, would look like this: 7 – 4 – 2.